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people everywhere with plenty of food and drink, the Amhara outlook would see in such a condition the prelude to mass civil war.

### *The Good Life*

When asked what is their chief goal in life, Amhara peasants frequently respond with the expression *sarto mablāt* ("having worked, to eat"). This response says many things. It reflects their constant preoccupation with the need to eat. It suggests that having enough to feed oneself, one's family, and one's guests is the farthest horizon toward which the peasants normally aspire. It also implies that in order to eat one should work by the sweat of his brow; it praises independence and self-reliance.

In raising their children Amhara peasants consciously strive to prepare them for making a living on their own. It is shameful to be dependent on others. It is worse yet to steal. Parents instill in their children a dread of becoming a thief. To be called *lēbā*, or "thief," is—except when in fun—a terrible insult. Stealing is felt to be somewhat worse than murder. In a survey of forty rural Amhara youths asked to name the six worst actions in the eyes of the local populace, eighty-five per cent mentioned stealing, and often under two or three different names; while only sixty per cent mentioned killing, and this answer was sometimes qualified as "killing without justification" or "killing by means of poison." One peasant commented on this question by observing, "You never kill a man unless he has done something wrong; but stealing, that is the sin."

The concept of *sarto mablāt* further implies that work is good. It expresses admiration for the industrious farmer. A majority of our TAT respondents preferred that one among twenty-five cards which showed a peasant hard at work in the fields. Agricultural work is idealized in Abyssinia because it promotes the virtues of independence and honesty. If fate concurs, it may even lead to wealth. And in any case it trains and shows one to be *guabaz*, a hero in man's work, for it is no small feat to toil from dawn till moonlight in the busy seasons or half a day on an empty stomach on fasting days.

Nevertheless, those observers are not wholly wrong who speak, like Griaule, of "the little penchant for work among the people."[13] Status considerations keep the Amhara from making a fetish of work as such. He looks down on the work of artisans because of their association with the evil eye. He avoids when possible unskilled manual labor, for traditionally that has been relegated to slaves or servants from "inferior" tribes. Work for wages is likewise deemed undignified. If one must work for someone else, it should be in the context of a more personal relationship—as a retainer, for example. Women are especially sensitive about this and much prefer to serve a man as his temporary wife than as a salaried housekeeper. Finally, although the peasant aspires "to eat, having worked," he is not wholly impervious to the appeal of the more

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*565 461 leisurely style of life of his social superiors. He would prefer, if he could but acquire the necessary servants and corvée labor, to "cause to plow" (*ās-ārasa*) rather than to plow (*ārasa*) himself.

*565 461 181 577 183 [423] If, in sketching the Amhara peasant's conception of the "good life," one moves from the sphere of goals to that of norms and values, one may say that while work as such is not conceived as an absolute value, the work of plowing one's land is regarded as a primary moral responsibility. The peasant's obligations toward his land extend beyond working it, moreover. At the local level he is supposed to keep it within his family, and should be ready to defend his rights to land use against all comers. At the national level he should help to keep the land "free"; that is, out of the hands of all foreigners.

*565 78 181 183 [262] [301] Obligations toward the deity are mostly of a ritual nature. Observing the fasts and avoiding forbidden foods are perhaps most important of all. It is also important to wear the symbol of the Ethiopian Christian, the *mätab*, a simple neckcord often holding a wrought silver cross. The church should be visited and heavy work avoided on the appropriate holy days. Prayers should not be neglected. When one passes by a church he should bow three times; when he enters a church compound he should "greet" the ark by kissing some stone or pole of the church building.

*565 577 181 183 The Amhara's ideal of Christian piety does, however, include certain good works which should be carried out in order to gain God's favor—giving alms to the indigent, visiting the sick or the prisoner, and aiding the wayfarer (who is referred to as a "guest of God"). But such injunctions play a slight part in

*565 577 673 181 183 the Amhara's rhetoric of social morality when compared to his extensive code of "shames," or *nawr*. Stealing and breaking the fasts are among the very worst *nawr*. Other *nawr* include murder without good reason or by a shameful means like poison; adultery; insulting or not showing proper respect toward others; failing to observe the conventions concerning engagement and marriage; failing to revenge offenses; and gossiping about others and thereby stirring up trouble. Though the sense of being shamed before God provides some measure of internal self-control in these matters, the Amhara peasant avoids immoral acts primarily for fear of being the victim of what others will say (*yelugntä*), so that he will not be "seized by shame" (*häfrat*) or suffer humiliation (*wardat*). His prime moral concern is not to be caught in the act of committing some *nawr*.

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*565 57 181 183 Positive moral obligations to persons outside the circle of close ones are thus kept to a minimum. Following the conventions of respect toward superiors and peers is all that is enjoined. The good life for the Amhara peasant is lived within a minimal, Hobbesian order. The ideal neighbor is defined as one who does not touch others (*saw aynakäm*). He does not touch another's land, wife, money, or personal feelings.

*565 602 571 181 183 Among *zamad*, however, a much warmer ideal of human relations obtains.

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of moral pressure for the reconciliation of conflict, it appears to place greater emphasis on the acting out of aggression. It does this, first of all, by defining a number of acts as offenses which justify violent retribution of some sort. Appropriation of one's land, seduction of one's wife, and injury of one's relatives are acts of this nature, and it is incumbent on the offended party to seek personal revenge or, as the Amhara put it, "to return the debt" (*bedder mammalas*). It is considered shameful to remain passive when so affronted, an attitude expressed in the following couplet:

*Balaw ba-dimotfar daggmaw ba-wānzā,*
*Bābbāt rīstennā yallam bamīst wāzzā.*

Shoot him with the dimotfar,* get him again with
a wanza,*
Taking your father's land or your wife away,
that is no joking matter.

Aggressiveness is further encouraged by the Amhara ego ideal of masculinity.[13] The identity of Amhara males is very much bound up with their capacity for aggressiveness, by both violent and verbal means. A man who has killed someone is regarded with a certain amount of veneration, and the act of killing is itself praised in verses such as:

*Saw gadlu saw gadlu: saw magdal yebajāl,*
*Saw yālgadala saw sihēd yāngolājāl.*

Kill a man! Kill a man! It is good to kill a man!
One who has not killed a man moves around
sleepily.

Similarly, verbal aggression is encouraged by the inclusion of excellence at litigation and insulting in the domain of proper male behavior.[14] The bestowal of insults is a rather stylized, if dangerous, procedure among the Amhara. According to Amhara customary law, insulting is a legal offense. The new criminal code provides for a gradation of penalties according to the seriousness of the insult, including fines which run from Eth$15 to as much as hundreds of dollars. The most serious insults include *bāryā* ("slave"); *ṭayb* ("evil-eyed artisan"); and *qomātā* ("leper"). Insults of lesser to medium degrees of seriousness include the following:

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|---|---|
| *hodām* | "greedy" (literally, "bellied") |
| *wafrām* | "fat" |
| *saḳārām* | "drunkard" |
| *quashāshā* | "dirty" |
| *amadām* | "scaly-faced" (literally, "ashen") |

* Types of rifles.